

## CLOUDS THAT HIDE JESUS.

[A sermon delivered in the College chapel by W. A. Welty, a member of the Theological class.]

Text: And a cloud received him out of their sight. Acts 1:9.

It needs but few words to impress upon your minds that the ascension was the final and crowning event in the redeeming life of Christ. If he was to be our Savior, and to save us in our nature, he was to be born into the world, he was to be born our Savior. He was to save us by his death as well as by his life. He died a death of agony and shame; he bore our sins in his own body on the cruel tree. He offered himself, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God.

If there had been no death there would have been no Savior. But if he would only have died, if he had remained in Joseph's tomb, there would have been simply one more added to the list of the world's martyrs.

Only one for whom we might mourn and weep that he found such evil treatment at the hands of the world. If he had only died we would be still in our sins. Then three days after his death came victory which enables us to say now, "O death, where is thy sting?" "O grave, where is thy victory?" He is a risen Savior who has saved us; not only a crucified Savior, but one whom God hath exalted to be a Prince and Savior. We know that our sins have been borne, because the Father has raised him from the tomb. But had he remained on the earth, what would have happened? He tells us himself, "It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away the comforter will not come unto you." There would have been the loss of a comforter. Brethren, can we conceive what a great loss this would be, if we were deprived of the power and comfort of the Holy Spirit. But this was not the plan. He went back to heaven to be at the right hand of God, to send the comforter into the world.

My text points to the parting moment when the Lord left his Apostles. We can see it all. On the eastern slope of Olivet that early spring morning the Lord met for his last farewell, and while he was speaking to them He was parted from them, and a cloud received him out of their sight. And two of the great concourse of angels that came from heaven to welcome him back with exultant songs, to his Father's right hand, came to cheer the apostles with the hope of his return. The apostles ceased to behold him with their natural eyes, but they had him in their hearts. Losing him did not fill them with sorrow and hopeless-

ness; they were strengthened for the occasion. The angelic message filled them with new courage. And they went back to Jerusalem, and were continually in the temple, praising God. Now this cloud which received Jesus out of their sight, and concealed him from their eyes, is a kind of parable. In the way of making a spiritual application of this text, it is a parable which is going on now. And I am persuaded to think it is still to a certain extent an explanation of the spiritual history of the world. The cloud still hides Jesus out of our sight; and it will continue to hide him out of our sight until he comes back in that great day, when every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him, shall see him and shall be terrified to see him coming in great power and glory. And when the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

Now this thought is one which might be pursued in many different ways. But there are three directions in which I wish to show its force and value. The cloud of ignorance hides the Savior out of our sight as to the fact of his being.

Superstition and sin hide him as to his providence. Unbelief hides him as to the reality of his love.

I. As to the fact of his Being. Nobody doubts that Jesus of Nazareth once was born into the world, and that this was the greatest event the world has ever seen. He lived a life that all admired, and died a death that all deplored. But the question comes to some people, what happened afterwards. There are three possible answers to the question. First, that he is still on the earth, and no one thinks that for a moment; but the other two call the attention to the thinking world. One is that he is still in Joseph's tomb, and the other is that he is on the right hand of God in heaven. Of course, we as disciples of Christ believe the latter, for Stephen, a man of God and full of the Holy Ghost, when he was about to depart this life, said, "Behold I see the heavens open, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God." Now if we had no other proof that Christ is a living Savior, this would be sufficient. But have we not other proofs that he is a risen and a living Savior? We have some of the effects of a living Savior demonstrated to us.

But the causes we have by faith. Why do we rest on the fact that Christ ascended, and a cloud received him out of sight.

Have we not a visible church? If Jesus is not a living being who is King of kings and Lord of lords, how can we ac-

count for the visible church of God for so these many years, since Jesus went back, occupying by steps the highest degrees, the fairest and most civilized, and most educated part of the whole world, and she is still clinging to Christ, building churches to his honor, organizing societies for the advancement of his cause. The church is living, moving and growing to this present evening's hour. The church with her salvation, the church with her life, the church with her sacrament, is a proof for a Christ, a living Christ for a reigning Christ, such as no other religion can bring.

Another argument for the fact of Christ's being, is that we know that he lives in our hearts. Unto you that believe said St. Peter, "He is precious." Jesus is fulfilling the promise he made before he went away. If any man love me he will keep my words, and my Father will love him and we will take up our abode with him. And we need not go to some distant city or Palestine to find him. We have not to go to some stately mansion to find him there. We find him in our hearts, speaking to us, watching over us, and now and then looking upon us with a look full of love and tender compassion. Can we who have the knowledge of a living Savior, say with the Apostle, I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. That is the kind of faith that sent martyrs to their grave. This is the faith through which you and I expect, one day to see his face. Yes, ignorance hides Christ from the view of many.

But thanks be to God our Father, it is only a cloud, and behind it the effulgent light of the Son of God is shining forth in great power and glory.

Brethren can we not do something toward the dispersing of this cloud of ignorance, that from behind it the glory of a living Savior may be seen?

## II.

The cloud of superstition and sin, with its despondent influence is hanging over many a poor soul, who knows nothing of the Providence of Jesus, who knows nothing of his power to save and bring them out of their lost condition to realize fully his providence or his ruling power. There is no person who can get behind the throne and see the sceptre in the King's hands, nor do we understand the wheels of his providence, and we are not expected to. But by faith we know that Jesus is on the right hand of God, and in great power is swaying his sceptre in heaven and in earth. How thankful we should be-